

**VSH Census Briefly Hits 52**

The census at Vermont State Hospital reached 52 on Wednesday, triggering the census management protocol that calls for step down of patients to designated agencies or hospitals. The increase came after several weeks of lower than normal census, although such fluctuations are relatively common. By Wednesday night, the census had been reduced to 50. This morning it was 51.

"In the normal course of events, there sometimes are periods of peak demand," said Health Commissioner Dr. Paul Jarris, "and we are in one of those periods this week."

The census management protocol is designed to assure that there are at least two beds at VSH available at all times for new admissions that cannot be safely managed anywhere else, and for court-ordered admissions. When the number of patients at VSH exceeds 50, the Health Department works closely with community agencies and hospitals to identify those patients who can be safely stepped down to other treatment programs. In each case, the process is guided by the clinical best interests of the individual patients.

This protocol assures that there is adequate access to VSH for the entire system. In addition, managing to a smaller census helps make the hospital environment more conducive to patient recovery.

"None of our plans for the state hospital changes the important fact that we are the safety net for all Vermonters," Dr. Jarris said. "We do not turn away Vermonters who need mental health care at the state hospital."

**Blake To Serve as Acting Deputy**

Paul Blake, director of the Division of Mental Health, has accepted the position of acting deputy of health for mental health services, effective immediately.

"Paul's professional competence and demeanor have earned him the respect of his colleagues within the department," Commissioner Jarris said, in making the appointment. "I also have found, from talking with members of the mental health community, that he has great credibility among consumers, families, practitioners and advocates."

Blake joins Jarris, Deputy for Public Health Sharon Moffatt, and Deputy for Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs Barbara Cimaglio in leading the department's senior management team. The department continues to actively recruit for a permanent deputy for mental health, but there is no indication how long that process will take.

## **Safety Inspection Today**

Ex-JCAHO surveyor Carroll “Bud” Ockert of Shelburne is inspecting Vermont State Hospital today, following up on the safety inspection recommendation in the recent Pomerantz report. Ockert, who has served as chief operating officer at two military hospitals, is former inspector general and management consultant, 7<sup>th</sup> Medical Command, United States Army, Europe. From 1989 until last year, he was an administrator surveyor for the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations. He is a life fellow of the American College of Healthcare Executives.

Ockert will immediately report orally to Commissioner Jarris and then report in writing on two categories of findings: serious threats to health and safety that must be corrected immediately, and lesser dangers that should be corrected as soon as possible. He has been asked to recommend solutions and/or changes in practice that would remove or significantly mitigate each hazard.

He is accompanied today by representatives from the Department of Building and General Services. BGS Commissioner Tasha Wallis has agreed to have her staff respond immediately to serious hazards that cannot otherwise be removed or significantly mitigated.

## **FAHC Reviewing VSH Upgrades**

Representatives of the Department of Buildings and General Services meet today with David Keely, FAHC vice president for facilities, to review plans and specifications for proposed improvements to the VSH physical plant. Keely will determine if the materials and equipment proposed to be installed are safe for use in patient areas. The plans include work in the seclusion rooms, air conditioning, porch and stairwell repair, quiet room work, and Brooks 1 yard safety enhancements for winter use by the patients.

## **Mobile Methadone Project Awarded CON**

The Vermont Department of Banking, Insurance, Securities and Health Care Administration on Thursday granted a Certificate of Need (CON) to Vermont Behavioral Health Services to provide treatment services from mobile units at sites in Newport and St. Johnsbury. To quote from the CON, the rationale for approval was to allow the applicant to “provide a range of services to opioid dependent adults residing in the Northeast Kingdom in Vermont including pharmacological therapy treatment (methadone and buprenorphine), substance abuse and mental health counseling, [and] medical supervision, as well as perinatal addiction and ancillary human services.”

## **Jarris to Brief Adult Standing Committee**

Commissioner Jarris will brief the Adult Standing Committee on the deputy search process and other matters on Monday. Both the Children, Adolescent and Family Standing Committee and the Adult Standing Committees have, as part of their charge, the responsibility of advising on the hiring of key management, and their advice will be sought during the recruitment process.

## **Transformation Grant**

There will be an initial meeting of the mental health transformation grant development workgroup on Wednesday, April 13, 1 p.m.- 4 p.m. at the Health Department offices in Burlington. The purpose of the meeting will be to develop the overall vision and framework for the application.

The grant writer will be Anne Lezak of ADL Consulting, a private consultant who has expertise in federal grant writing. The program development consultant will be Joy Livingston of Flint Springs Consulting, who has done work with the Mental Health Division, including a recent report on Act 114.

The list of workgroup members is still being developed. More information is available from Deputy Commissioner Barbara Cimaglio ([bcimagl@vdh.state.vt.us](mailto:bcimagl@vdh.state.vt.us)).

## **Clinical Services Contract Update**

Fletcher Allen Health Care officials are reviewing the Health Department's draft of the "scope of work" section of a proposed contract for clinical services at VSH that would begin on July 1.

## **Children and Parental Depression**

Commissioner Jarris, Division Director Paul Blake and Child, Adolescent & Family Unit Director Charlie Biss met this week with representatives from the University of Vermont's Raising Healthy Children Program about a possible collaboration. The program offers a free intervention to families with the goal of early prevention of the negative effects of parental depression on offspring. The study aspires to reach 100 northern Vermont families over the course of the next five years. Eligible families will be randomly assigned to one of two programs:

- In the family group, effective parenting techniques as well as child coping skills will be the emphasis of the teaching.
- In the family readings program, psycho-educational readings will be assigned on the effects of depression in the family, to be read at home.

Eligibility requirements are 1) a history of parental depression, and 2) at least one child between the ages of 9 and 15. The program is actively recruiting families in the greater Chittenden County. For more information or for an informational packet, call, toll free, 888-350-7659 or 802-656-4449, or email [raisinghealthychildren@uvm.edu](mailto:raisinghealthychildren@uvm.edu).

## **Quality Improvement Administrator Sought for Corrections**

The Health Department will be running ads in coming days to recruit a program administrator for the department's quality oversight responsibilities with regard to health, mental health and substance abuse services within the Department of Corrections. The individual chosen will work to ensure that inmates in Vermont's corrections system receive appropriate and timely services. More information is available from Tricia Cummings ([tcummin@vdh.state.vt.us](mailto:tcummin@vdh.state.vt.us)).

## **Children's Unmet Needs Fund**

The Division of Mental Health's Child, Adolescent & Family Unit administers a small fund for one-time expenses to children receiving services through a children's mental health center or a specialized agency. This fund is earmarked for unmet needs and service costs that, if not provided, might negatively affect overall treatment stability and where no other funding source is available. Such needs might include personal needs, adaptive devices, respite, camp tuition, and clinical evaluations. Funding is prioritized to meet the unmet mental health needs of children to assure safety and stability. In Fiscal Year 2004, the largest categories of funding expenditures included summer camp tuition (32%), clinical assessment (15%), out-of-home placement (14%), respite (11%), and transportation (9%). For information on how to access this fund, please contact Todd Bauman ([tbauman@vdh.state.vt.us](mailto:tbauman@vdh.state.vt.us)) at 802 241-2719.